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U. S. Department of Agriculture

MOBILIZING FARM MANPOWER FOR WAR PRODUCTION

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To produce the war crops needed by the United Nations, American agriculture must be brought as quickly as possible to full capacity. This means the most efficient use of both farm lands and farm manpower.

About half the Nation's six million farm operators have a gross income of more than \$900 a year. Most of these farmers are now operating at or near full capacity, and are producing the bulk of the commercial crops. If they can get the labor they need, these farms can maintain their present high level of production and supply the greatest part of the needed food. However, they are now threatened with a labor shortage which might seriously reduce total farm production in 1943.

Importance of the Small Farmer in Food Production

There are about 2,900,000 farmers, exclusive of strictly seasonal workers, with a gross income of less than \$900 a year. Of these, about 1,600,000 are bona fide farm producers who devote more than half of their work time to farming. Most of the work on their farms is done by the farmer and members of his family. These farmers, however, are underemployed. In some cases their soil is too poor for efficient production, or their tracts too small to employ their full-time labor. Or they may lack the knowledge and skills to make the best use of their land, or the working capital to finance an adequate farming plan. On such farms there are wasted every day man-hours of labor which in terms of farm production equal the manpower needed to produce 200 million pounds of pork, or 25 million gallons of milk, or 2 million dozen eggs. To reach our production goals, we must make better use of this great reserve of manpower.

Some underemployed farmers will go into the armed forces and a larger number could be made available for work in war industries. To bring the remainder into full agricultural production, four things are necessary:

1. The small farmer who can make his greatest contribution on his present farm must be provided with the credit, advice, supervision and other aids he needs to make the best use of his land and his labor.
2. The small farmer who is stranded on poor land while good land is available in his own farming area must be helped to acquire a farm on which he can become fully productive and must be given such assistance as he needs in carrying out his new undertaking.
3. Small farmers who can serve best by moving to other areas as operators or workers must be informed of such opportunities and must obtain training in the work they are to do and transportation to the place where they are needed.



4. Farm workers needed for seasonal labor must be recruited and transported from labor-surplus areas to labor-deficit areas. Some of these will probably stay as year-round workers or operators in their new location. Others will return to the farms from which they were drawn.

As a result of these changes, many of the poorest farms could be retired from cultivation and used as pasturage, forest land, and other constructive purposes. In other cases, small farms vacated by those who leave could be combined for more efficient operation by other small farmers in the community. The acreage devoted to crops needed in the war effort could thus be brought to a high level of productiveness.

#### Farm Security Program Helps Small Farmers Become Better Producers

The Government has in the Farm Security Administration a program designed to utilize the manpower of small farmers for food production. Today this agency is moving toward all four of the preceding objectives.

For seven years, the Farm Security Administration has been helping hundreds of thousands of low-income farmers improve their resources and their productive abilities. Long before Pearl Harbor, Farm Security was emphasizing the need for increased food production among its borrowers. With the United States now at war, this agency of the U. S. Department of Agriculture is redoubling its efforts to help the half million farm families now on the rehabilitation program step up their production of Food for Freedom, and additional families are being helped as new loans are made from current funds.

Rehabilitation loans are for farmers who do not have the security to qualify for loans from banks, production credit associations, and other lending institutions. The loans enable them to acquire livestock, machinery, equipment, and other things they need to become better producers. An educational program, with the farm as the classroom, goes along with the loans. County farm and home management supervisors consult with the borrowers regularly and help them improve their skills.

That small farmers, if assisted with loans and training in farm and home management, can increase production is shown by what FSA borrowers have accomplished. A survey at the end of 1941 showed that those who had been on the program more than a year had doubled their food production. Their net incomes had increased 80 percent. They had made a gain of 43 percent in their net worth.

To date more than 177,800 rehabilitation borrowers have repaid their loans in full. Most of the families are meeting the principal and interest payments as they come due. Even before the war Farm Security borrowers, despite their original insecurity and handicaps, had repaid nearly 80 percent of the amounts due, not including substantial advance payments. With their production geared into war food needs, their repayments have mounted accordingly.



Total principal repayments during the fiscal year ending June 30, 1942 amounted to \$81,403,546, a 63 percent increase over the preceding year, and collections in the latter part of 1942 are showing an even greater rise.

Last winter FSA county supervisors asked borrower-families what increases in the products essential to the war effort they thought they could make in 1942. Here are some of the increases above their past production which the families pledged:

<u>Commodity</u>	<u>Increase over 1941</u>
Milk	1,150,000,000 lbs.
Pork	235,000,000 lbs. (dressed wt.)
Eggs	77,000,000 doz.
Soybeans	7,000,000 bu.
Tomatoes	7,500,000 bu.
Peanuts	2,500,000 bu.
Beef	34,000,000 lbs.

Reports from county supervisors indicate that most of the borrower-families are living up to their pledges. Some are "going over the top".

Machinery and sire-service co-ops, purchasing and marketing associations, group medical and dental care, debt adjustment, and war leases are other Farm Security services which are enabling small farmers to become really effective soldiers in the Nation's agricultural army.

Farm ownership loans, with which tenants and farm workers can purchase family-type farms under terms of the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act, are serving to keep good land in production by full-time owner-operators with their own family labor supply. In addition, these loans enable small farmers who can increase their acreage with their family labor, to bring their units to maximum size and thus increase production without need for additional labor.

As was expected, there has arisen a need for competent year-round operators and workers to replace farmers on good land who go into the armed forces, war industries, and other activities. This represents loss not only in the number of workers but in valuable experience and training. Both must be replaced. Farm Security is acting to meet this need with a two-fold experiment of supplying tenants and workers from among farmers who have been underemployed, and of training them in the special skills they need. Many have already had the benefit of training and supervision in farm management as FSA borrowers. If a regular program of this sort be developed, special training centers would be established in cooperation with the U. S. Office of Education and State agricultural colleges.

In addition, Farm Security is operating 95 labor supply centers in seasonal crop areas. These centers provide housing, health, and sanitary facilities for thousands of seasonal workers whose labor is now so vitally important to the harvesting of war crops. In 1942 FSA, in cooperation with the U. S.



Employment Service, began a program of recruiting and transporting seasonal farm workers. During the harvest season 9,000 workers were supplied to growers and this program holds possibilities for supplying workers on a much larger scale in 1943.

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